Will Insley: ONECITY
Collection CAE2009

Introduction/Abstract
American abstract artist Will Insley dedicated 50 years of his life to his visionary city concept named ONECITY, which he manifested through drawings, paintings, models, photo-collages, and writing. Materials include an exhibition ephemera, photographs of models and drawings, press materials, publications, and artist information.

Biographical Note: Will Insley
Will Insley (1929 - 2011) was an American abstract artist who dedicated 50 years to creating paintings, drawings, writing, models, and photomontages based on his concept for a visionary city, entitled, ONECITY. His artwork has been exhibited in numerous museums in the United States and Europe, including a solo exhibition at Guggenheim Museum and Museum of Modern Art in New York City, as well as inclusion in Documenta 5 and 6.


The 1960s was a period when Insley wanted to challenge the accepted formal limits of art; one of the results was his subsequent fascination with modular, repetitive structures. In Insley’s own words, “between ‘61 and ‘63 I did my first series of shaped paintings, using cloverleaf forms around a central hole. [...] My painting quickly shed all its ‘painting’ aspects save its diagrammatic nature and moved into the mind in search of the source of its fragments.” In the late 1960s, Will Insley envisioned the concept of ONECITY, a 675-mile square architectural labyrinth buried in the central North American plains.

Scope and Content
Artist Will Insley’s decades long project, ONECITY, consists of drawings, paintings, and photo-collages. The drawings represent architectural renderings of abstract buildings which surround ONECITY as vacant ruins to be abandoned after they are built. The drawings of abstract buildings were originally shown in his exhibition at the Solomon Guggenheim Museum, NYC in 1984. The acrylic paintings, also named 'Wall Fragments', represent remnants from the walls of ONECITY. The photomontages further the visualization of this civilization. ONECITY was designed as an imaginary city to house 400 million people of the time, considered the entire population of the United States. During the era of ONECITY the outer rim of the country is inhabitable, possibly due to environmental devastation.

During the 40 years he developed ONECITY, Insley established not only an architectural layout consisting of over 14,000 outer city square buildings, each two and half miles wide, but an entire sociological order for its citizens. No visible leader exists, but a democratic voting system occurs every day. Instead of a vertical religious order, the inhabitants worship the horizontal line as a mythical space between earth and sky. The center of ONECITY holds the Opaque Library, “the seed and soul” which houses information and secrets, not accessible to the populace. Through his wall fragments, drawings, and photomontage, Insley explored an abstract civilization, created line by line using logic, dimension and spatial theories in combination with the interrelationship of people living in a futuristic environment.
Materials include an exhibition ephemera, photographs of models and drawings, press materials, publications, and artist information.

This archive is currently in process.